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THE EDITOR'S DIARY.

The Abuse of the Psychological Moment.

NEWSPAPERS and magazines are doubtless but the writing of history as it happens, and they have their own value as reflecting the views, the emotions, the outlook, of the moment; but the journalist who fancies that his whole responsibility begins and ends with this statement has much to learn. There are two sides even to the moment's emotion; there is always the true aspect and the false, the lasting aspect and the fleeting. To catch the public interest at the very moment of an event is something; but surely such papers as consider timeliness before content are sacrificing the larger as well as the better half of their *clientèle*. Nothing so adds to the worth, the real value, of the papers of to-day as a distinct stand against sensationalism, against tickling the palate of the masses. It is true that the death of a great man should be chronicled at the moment of the happening, and some sort of statement made of the esteem in which he is held; but it is also true that the really critical estimates of a man's work and genius should not be done ten years before his death and stowed away in a drawer, but that it should be carefully and slowly done after his death, when all the data are to hand; and surely such critical article ought to be just as valuable six or ten months or a year after a man has passed from us as one month later. A young writer, who had had the inestimable advantage of knowing intimately the great St.-Gaudens, of being advised and encouraged and helped by his friendship, example and counsel, and who had a long series of the great artist's personal letters, recently lamented being unable to set these reminiscences into shape at once, saying: "Four months from now, when I can turn my hand to it, all the papers will say that the interest in St.-Gaudens has passed for the mo-

ment and they can hardly find room," etc., etc. But by this method the whole object of newspapers and current magazines, that they shall record history in the making, is thwarted, and they become no better than unreliable gossips. After all, the public is not so much interested in the happening of the moment as it is interested in what is well and vitally set forth. The permanent interest in Shakespeare's plays grows out of the fact of his deep insight into human nature; he knew not only what was interesting at the moment and what was expected by his audience, but he also knew what lay beneath—the undying interest in men for man, for true characterization, for facts of temperament and the natural clash and interplay of temperaments under given situations. When the whole truth is told, it is the permanent, the vital and the real that the people care about, and once a journalist learns this he can chronicle events of a century or of ten years back with as much verve and abandon as last night's tragedy, and it will be just as interesting; the more he is able, too, to connect last night's tragedy with the events of a century past, the more will people be eager to read his work.

There is a great abuse made of the psychological moment, and it is just as well to know that it is the truth of the moment which is interesting and that every moment and every event has its permanent and valuable sides, and who seizes these is the successful journalist.